

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

by
J.K. Rowling

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When the Chamber of Secrets is opened again at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, second-year student Harry Potter finds himself in danger from a dark power that has once more been released on the school. Book #2

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Main Characters

Albus Dumbledore the headmaster at Hogwarts school

Aragog the leader of the spider monsters; it has an affection and loyalty to Hagrid

Argus Filch the mean-spirited caretaker at Hogwarts

Colin Creevey a student who is a fan of Harry; he becomes a victim of the basilisk

Dobby the Malfoys' house-elf, who tries to prevent Harry from returning to Hogwarts

Draco and Lucius Malfoy a son and father who believe Hogwarts should only admit true-blood wizards

Gilderoy Lockhart the conceited new professor hired to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts

Ginny Weasley the Weasley girl who has a crush on Harry; Voldemort uses her to open the Chamber of Secrets

Hagrid Harry's gigantic friend who enjoys taking care of monsters

Harry Potter the main character of the story; a wizard student famous for having survived an attack by Voldemort at a young age

Hermione Granger an extremely gifted Muggle-born student; she is good friends with Harry and Ron

Moaning Myrtle the ghost of a murdered girl; she haunts the girls' bathroom

Mr. and Mrs. Weasley the good-natured adults who let Harry spend some of the summer with them

Professor Binns a ghost who teaches History of Magic

Ron, Fred, George and Percy Weasley good friends of Harry

Tom Riddle/Lord Voldemort a model student who found a way to live through his diary; he eventually grew up to become Voldemort

Vocabulary

"dodgy" a British expression meaning doubtful or skeptical

banshee a female spirit known to moan and wail

haggis a pudding made of animal products boiled in an animal's stomach

myth a legend that explains a belief or phenomena

talisman an object thought to act as a charm or protector

treacle fudge/pudding very sweet treats made of molasses

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Synopsis

Harry Potter is a young orphaned wizard who is about to begin his second year of training at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry spends his summer vacation at the home of the Dursleys, Harry's non-wizard relatives. The Dursleys abuse and neglect Harry, and he longs for his friends at Hogwarts.

One day a house-elf named Dobby appears in Harry's bedroom at the Dursleys' house. Dobby advises Harry not to return to school because his life would be placed in danger. Harry is then rescued from his miserable stay at the Dursleys' home by his wizard friend Ron Weasley and Mr. Weasley's flying car. Harry spends the remainder of the summer at the Weasley household, and Ron's younger sister, Ginny, develops a crush on Harry.

When it is time for Ron and Harry to return to Hogwarts, they find they cannot enter the magical train station to board the Hogwarts Express. They later discover it was Dobby, the house-elf, who tried to prevent their journey. Frantic to make it to the start of their second school year on time, Harry and Ron illegally drive the flying car to Hogwarts. Unfortunately, they lose control of the vehicle and crash-land into a school tree, thereby beginning the school year in trouble.

Harry, Ron, and their studious friend, Hermione, soon become comfortable with their academic routine. Events begin to go awry, however, when Harry's arch-enemy, a nasty rival named Draco Malfoy, terribly upsets everyone by insulting Hermione because her parents are "Muggles," or people with no wizard ability. Draco tries to gain support for a movement that emphasizes the superiority of the "pure-blooded wizards" over the "Mudbloods," or those with Muggle heritages.

Harry has not forgotten Dobby's warning about danger at Hogwarts, and he is somewhat frightened by a strange voice he can hear saying "rip...tear...kill." The voice seems to be coming from the school walls, yet nobody but Harry is able to

hear it. After one such occurrence, Harry tries to follow the voice and discovers a puddle of water leaking out of a bathroom. The phrase "THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE" has been written on the wall. He then looks up to see the petrified body of the school caretaker's cat hanging by its tail.

Rumors begin to circulate as Harry is accused of being the Heir of Slytherin, who, according to legend, is the only person capable of opening the Chamber of Secrets. The Chamber of Secrets is rumored to be a secret room that contains the dark powers to rid Hogwarts of all wizards who are not worthy. Draco Malfoy insists those who are not worthy are those of Muggle ancestry, and his theory seems to be supported by the petrification of a student named Colin Creevey and Harry's friend Hermione. Unfortunately for Harry, his classmates' suspicion is fueled during a dueling class incident which reveals that Harry can communicate with snakes. This trait is supposedly a characteristic of dark wizards and the Slytherin's heirs .

One day, while investigating a bathroom near the place where the writing appeared, Harry discovers a blank diary. Harry is able to communicate with the diary by writing in it, and he learns that it had belonged to a former Hogwarts student named Tom Marvolo Riddle. Tom Riddle gives Harry the impression that Hagrid, the friendly school groundskeeper, is responsible for opening the Chamber of Secrets and releasing a horrible monster. Because of pressure from the governing board of wizards, Hagrid is taken away to a magician's prison and Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, is asked to resign.

After a deadly confrontation with giant spiders in the Forbidden Forest, Harry learns that Hagrid is innocent and had never opened the Chamber of Secrets. Tom Riddle's diary is stolen from Harry and, on a hospital visit to Hermione, he notices a torn library book page clutched in her petrified hand. From this page Harry learns the culprit is a giant snake called a basilisk, which can kill any person

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who looks directly into its eyes. Harry assumes that Hermione and the other victims had only seen the basilisk's reflection and were therefore petrified instead of killed. Harry also infers that, since he can understand snakes, it is the basilisk's voice he has been hearing throughout the castle; he figures it must be traveling through the pipes in the wall.

When Ron's sister Ginny disappears, Harry decides to search for the basilisk and rescue her. Harry finds a magical entrance in the same bathroom where he discovered the diary and eventually makes his way to the Chamber of Secrets. Here he sees the ghostly form of Tom Marvolo Riddle and the nearly dead Ginny. Tom tells Harry he has been using Ginny to do his bidding, and it was she who opened the Chamber of Secrets. It is also revealed that Tom Riddle is the young spirit of Lord Voldemort, an evil wizard who murdered Harry Potter's parents. Voldemort preserved his spirit in the diary when he was a schoolboy, and Ginny has released him. Tom Riddle commands the monstrous basilisk to kill Harry, but Fawkes, Dumbledore's pet phoenix, saves Harry by pecking out the basilisk's eyes and giving Harry a magical hat from which he produces a sword. Harry slays the basilisk, but he is wounded by its poisonous fangs. The phoenix, however, cries into Harry's wound, which instantly heals him. He then punctures the diary with a poisonous tooth, destroying Tom Riddle.

At the end of the story, Ginny is saved, Dumbledore and Hagrid return to their jobs, Dobby the house-elf is freed from his slavery, the basilisk victims are on the road to recovery, and Harry is once again a hero.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Ron tells Harry, "If he [Dobby] doesn't stop trying to save your life he's going to kill you." How does Dobby interfere with Harry's life at Hogwarts?

Dobby causes problems for Harry very early in the story. He makes it so Ron and Harry cannot pass through the wall that leads to the Hogwarts Express. Also, Dobby is responsible for the cursed Bludgers during the Quidditch match. The Bludgers furiously seek out Harry and end up causing him to fall off his broomstick and break his arm.

Literary Analysis

How do Harry Potter's interactions with Dobby show that Harry is a kind person?

There are many possible responses, but one answer involves his polite treatment of Dobby. When Harry first meets Dobby, he invites the house-elf to sit down, and he uses the word "please" with him. Dobby is surprised to be treated as an equal instead of as an inferior. At the end of the story, Harry ensures Dobby's freedom by tricking Mr. Malfoy.

Inferential Comprehension

At Flourish and Blotts, Mr. Malfoy hands Ginny her book and says, "Here, girl -- take your book - it's the best your father can give you." What was he referring to?

Mr. Malfoy is being insulting. He is implying that Mr. Weasley cannot afford anything better for his daughter. Mr. Weasley, though a wizard, is not a wealthy man. Mr. Malfoy looks down on Mr. Weasley because his job involves investigating Muggle objects which have been illegally made magical.

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Constructing Meaning

How will Harry spend the summer after his second year at Hogwarts? How would the reader like to see him spend his summer?

In all likelihood, he will return to the Dursleys' home. His relationship with them will not improve, and they will continue to treat him as an outcast. A more suitable situation would involve Harry spending his summer with the Weasleys. At their house, he is treated with respect. He is treated like family and has the opportunity to learn a lot about being a wizard.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Plot Have students pretend they are book reviewers for a magazine, newspaper, or even a news show on television. Have students prepare a book review they would like to see presented. Give the students guidelines which must be covered in their review: plot, character development, dialogue, suspense, and writing style are just a few examples that can be used.

Understanding the Author's Craft Some people describe J.K. Rowling's success as a "rags to riches" story. She was a struggling, single mother trying to earn enough money to survive. She started scribbling bits of a story together, and that story eventually became the successful Harry Potter books. Have students use the Internet or any other informational media to learn more about J.K. Rowling. What did she study in college? Where did she get the ideas for her books? Have students present their findings to the class.

Identifying Reading Strategies Many spells are used in this novel. Have students go through the book and find all the spells that are used. Have students make a list with the name of the spell on one side, and what the spell does on the other side. The functions of some of the spells are not specifically stated, but they are given a name, and students can infer from the action that takes place what the spells do. Some examples are: Tarantallegra (a spell which causes a person's

legs to dance around), Aparecium (a spell to make things appear), and Expelliarmus (a spell which causes something to leave another's possession). Have the students use this list to examine any root words, prefixes, or suffixes that provide a clue to what the spell can do. They can then rearrange the word parts to create new ideas for spells.

Responding to Literature When more and more petrifications start happening around Hogwarts, students begin using talismans and amulets. Ask students if they have any superstitions. Why are they superstitious of those things? What do they do to avoid what they are superstitious of? Do they have any good luck charms they like to carry around, such as crosses, rabbits' feet, charm bracelets, or lucky pennies?